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Integral-Existential Approach to Psychotherapy

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for PSYC 6200

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4/20/2011

**Abstract**

My unique theoretical approach to Psychotherapy is called Integral-Existential Psychotherapy. This approach is a synthesis of Integral Psychology and Existential therapy. Integral Psychology is an all-encompassing holistic rather than an exclusivist or reductive approach. Existentialism focuses itself with the essence of the first person subjective experience of inner being. This paper focuses on how the Ken Wilber's work in Integral Psychology provides the Integral-Existential therapist an increased ability to help the client become more aware of their general worldview and provides an effective framework to discover and realize their authentic being. This new awareness can help the client create meaning in their lives that is better aligned with the authentic self and reduce maladaptive behaviors.

## **Introduction**

My unique theoretical approach to psychotherapy is called Integral-Existential Approach. This original approach is a synthesis of the developmental model of Integral Psychology with a main emphasis of Existentialism. Integral Psychology is an all-encompassing holistic rather than an exclusivist or reductive approach. This theory includes lower, ordinary, non-ordinary, and spiritual or transcendent states of consciousness (Integral Theory, 2011).

Existentialism concerns itself with the essence of inner being with ontology, the science of being (May and Yalom, 1995). It gives focus to living in the present in a productive way and holding out hope for a spiritual awakening, a restoration of the meaning of life (Bugental, 1978).

## **Historical Development**

### **Integral Psychology**

Important contributors in the field of integral psychology are Sri Aurobindo and Ken Wilber. Integral Psychology evolved through the synthesis of Sri Aurobindo's teachings. He presents Integral Psychology as a synthesis of the two major streams of depth psychology with the humanistic-existential and contemporary psychoanalytic approaches both within an integrating East-West framework (Cortright, 2007).

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) was an accomplished scholar, yogi, mystical poet, and an Indian nationalist. He was very actively involved in the politics of India. Aurobindo came up with an entirely new system of spirituality. He named his pathway to spirituality Integral Yoga (Colors of India, 2011). Sri Aurobindo never used the term Integral Psychology but his work was central to its inception.

Ken Wilber (1949-Present) is another key thinker in Integral Psychology who has written numerous articles and books on adult development, developmental psychology, philosophy, ecology, and stages of faith. His work formulates what he calls Integral Theory. In 1998, he founded the Integral Institute, for teaching and applications of Integral theory (Ken Wilber, 2011).

Wilber wrote *Integral Psychology*, wherein he applied his integral model of consciousness to the field of psychology. This was the first book in which he embraced the Spiral Dynamics model of human development. In Integral Psychology, Wilber identifies stages that range from "archaic instinctual" to the "holistic wave of consciousness" which exhibits "cognition of unity, holism, dynamic dialecticism, or universal integralism" (Wilber, 1999). Wilber considered Integral psychology an inclusive or holistic psychology rather than exclusivist or reductive. Multiple explanations of phenomena do not compete with each other for supremacy. They are valued and integrated into a coherent overall view (Wilber, 2000).

## **Existential Psychotherapy**

Existential Psychotherapy is rooted in the philosophical works of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. They introduced existential thought to Western Europe and their writings established the foundation for several influential philosophers including Albert Campus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Buber, and Martin Heidegger (Parrott, 167).

Rollo May (1909-1994) an American psychologist, expanded on the work of Existentialism. He attended Michigan State and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in English. After graduation, May taught in Salonika, Greece and stayed in Vienna for two summers where he participated in seminars conducted by Alfred Adler. May also attended Union Theological

Seminary and after a short and disappointing stint as a minister, he decided to pursue his PHD in Clinical Psychology (Parrott, 148).

Irvin D. Yalom (1931-Present) born in Washington DC is another important contributor to existentialist psychology. He was influenced heavily by May and considered to be one of the great organizers of existential theory. Around 1980, Yalom wrote a book called *Existential Psychotherapy* where he organized the extensive work on existential theory into four major themes: 1) Death, 2) Freedom (& Responsibility), 3) Isolation, and 4) Meaninglessness. According to Yalom, these four existential realities are the root of most psychological issues and have no ultimate answers. It is generally agreed that these four issues are central to the human experience (Existential-Therapy, 2004).

### **View of Human Nature**

My Integral-Existential Theoretical approach's combined focus is on the ongoing development of the first-person subjective existence and its ongoing developmental relationship with external physical, social, cultural and material reality. This theory also addresses a belief in human freedom, and choice of lifestyle. The primary focus is on meaning as it relates to life, responsibility, aloneness, death, and the human experience. Each person is unique and encounters external influences that shape these existential perspectives such as interpersonal relationships with family members, culture, social, and religious memes.

Human beings are in a developmentally unfolding process with a substantially different form at each of its stages of growth. Because of this, an understanding of human consciousness requires an examination of a person's awareness and perspective at each of its levels of unfolding

(Lewis, 2006).

### **Existentialist View of Human Nature**

The external world is neutral and has no inherent meaning. When a person defines their external reality, that definition influences the individual's subjective emotional experience. Some maladaptive emotions and behaviors can be the byproduct of adopting externally derived definitions or beliefs from outside sources (family, local community, church, etc). Existentialism places emphasis on the essence of existence, a phenomena that is inherent in being human (Parrott, 152). This theoretical approach focuses on meaning relating to anxiety of life, death, and the relevance of individual experience (Parrott, 398).

Many existentialists believe we face important and difficult decisions and the quality of those decisions is limited by our knowledge and frame of reference in which these decisions are made (May 1991). Integral Psychology provides an extensive frame of reference for the therapist to refer to in the therapy session with a client.

### **Integral View of Human Nature: Stages of Consciousness**

In Integral Psychology, Ken Wilber presents charts that summarize over 100 developmental psychologists, ancient, modern and postmodern. He primarily uses Spiral Dynamics that was based on research by Clare Graves. This Integral approach (further developed by Don Beck and Christopher Cowan) shows that human beings evolve or develop through eight major waves or stages of consciousness. I have adapted them to focus on the client's primary perspective (Lewis, 2006).

#### **1. Archaic-Instinctual**

This individual's primary perspective and focus is on basic human survival; food, water, warmth, sex, and safety. This person uses habits and instincts just to survive. The distinct modern views of people are barely awakened or sustained. People form into survival bands to perpetuate life. Those with this perspective would be individuals of lower functioning populations.

Examples include: First human societies, newborn, starving masses, shell shock, infants, senile elderly, late-stage Alzheimer's victims, mentally ill street people, and badly treated war camp prisoners. Spiral Dynamics experts' approximate members include 0.1% of the adult population and 0% of the power.

## **2. Magical-Animistic**

This individual's perspective is animistic; magical spirits, good and bad, swarm the earth leaving blessings, curses, and spells which determine events. These people tend to join into ethnic tribes or groups. Individuals believe that spirits exist in ancestors and bond the tribe. Kinship and lineage are used to establish political links. This sounds "holistic" but is actually atomistic: there may be a name for each bend in the river but no name for the river.

Examples include: Third-World settings, gangs, athletic teams, and corporate "tribes." Belief in voodoo-like curses, blood oaths, ancient grudges, good luck charms, family rituals, and magical ethnic beliefs and superstitions; Experts say that members are approximately 10% of the population and 1% of the power.

## **3. Power Gods-Individualistic Stage**

This perspective is the first emergence of a self distinct from the tribe, and expresses the powerful, impulsive, egocentric, and heroic perspective. Individuals embrace magical-mythic spirits,

dragons, beasts, and powerful people. They view archetypal gods and goddesses, powerful beings, forces to be reckoned with and exist as both good and bad. In previous societies, these individuals saw others as feudal lords protecting underlings in exchange for obedience and labor. These people see the world as a jungle full of threats and predators. This person conquers, out-foxes, and dominates; enjoys self to the fullest without regret or remorse; be here now.

Examples include the following: Rebellious youth, frontier mentalities, gang leaders, soldiers of fortune, New-Age narcissism, and wild rock stars. Experts say members are approximately 20% of the population and 5% of the power.

#### **4. Mythic-Religious-Order**

Individuals who have adopted this worldview perceive life as having meaning, direction, and purpose, with outcomes determined by an all-powerful other being or order. They believe righteous order enforces a code of conduct based on absolutist and unvarying principles of "right" and "wrong." Violating the code or rules may have severe, perhaps everlasting repercussions. Individuals who follow the code yield rewards for being faithful. In the minds of these adherents, there are rigid social hierarchies, they are paternalistic, and there is only one right way and only one correct way to think about everything. They establish Law and Order and impulsivity is controlled through guilt and there are concrete-literal and fundamentalist beliefs. These people support obedience under the rule of order which is strongly conventional and conformist. Those at this stage are often "religious" or "mythic"

Examples include: Religious fundamentalism (e.g., Christian and Islamic), patriotism, totalitarianism, codes of chivalry and honor, charitable good deeds, Boy and Girl Scouts,

and the "moral majority." Experts say members are approximately 40% of the population and 30% of the power.

## **5. Scientific-Rational**

At this wave or perspective, the individual "escapes" from the "herd mentality" of the religious-mythic perspective, and seeks truth and meaning in individualistic terms--experimental, objective, mechanistic, and operational--"scientific" in the typical sense. To this person, the world is a rational and well-oiled machine, with natural laws that can be learned, mastered, and manipulated for one's own purposes. These people can be highly achievement oriented, especially toward materialistic gains. They consider the laws of science rule politics, the economy, and human events. These individuals see the world is a chess-board on which games are played where winners gain pre-eminence and perks over losers. Marketplace alliances are established to manipulate earth's resources for one's strategic gains. This is the basis of corporate entities.

Examples include: Ayn Rand's Objectivism, Wall Street, emerging middle classes around the world, cosmetics industry, trophy hunting, colonialism, the Cold War, fashion industry, materialism, secular humanism, and liberal self-interest. Experts assess that members are approximately 30% of the population and 50% of the power.

## **6. Post Modern-Pluralistic**

This perspective is communitarian, drawn to human bonding, ecological sensitivity, and networking. They feel the human spirit must be freed from greed, dogma, and divisiveness; feelings and caring supersede cold rationality; value is placed on cherishing of the earth, and life. These individuals are against hierarchy and establish lateral bonding and linking. The permeable

self, relational self, and group intermeshes. There is an emphasis on dialogue and relationships. The basis is on value communities (i.e., freely chosen affiliations based on shared sentiments). One reaches decisions through reconciliation and consensus. The downside can be interminable "processing" and an incapacity to reach decisions. They focus on refreshing spirituality and bringing harmony to enrich human potential. These people have strongly egalitarian, anti-hierarchy, pluralistic values, and a social construction of reality, diversity, multiculturalism, and relativistic value systems. This worldview is often called pluralistic relativism. These individuals display subjective, nonlinear thinking and show a greater degree of affective warmth, sensitivity, and caring, for earth and all its inhabitants.

Examples include : Deep ecology, postmodernism, Netherlands idealism, Rogerian counseling, Canadian health care, humanistic psychology, liberation theology, cooperative inquiry, Greenpeace, animal rights, ecofeminism, post-colonialism, politically correct, diversity movements, human rights issues, and ecopsychology. Experts view members are approximately 10% of the population and 15% of the power. This is 10% of the world population. They also estimate that around 20-25% of the American population is at this stage.

Each stage is to be "transcended and included" which means each stage goes beyond (or transcends) the previous one, and yet it includes or embraces it in its own makeup. Each developmental stage of existence is a fundamental ingredient of all subsequent stages, and thus each is to be cherished and embraced.

Each stage can itself be activated or reactivated as life circumstances warrant. In

emergency situations, we can activate survival power drives; in response to chaos, we might need to activate order; in looking for a new job, we might need individualistic achievement drives; in marriage and with friends, world centric close bonding. All of these stages have something important to contribute.

The first tier stages cannot fully appreciate the existence of the each higher stages. Each of the earlier stages thinks that its worldview is the correct or best perspective. It reacts negatively if challenged; it defends its perspective by, using its own tools, whenever it is threatened.

Mythical-Religious people are generally very uncomfortable with both archaic group impulsiveness and individualistic thinking. Individualistic adherents think order society participation is for suckers and worldcentric is weak and woo-woo. **Worldcentric** cannot easily abide by Modern or Nationalistic excellence and value rankings, big pictures, hierarchies, or anything that appears authoritarian, and thus worldcentric. Worldcentric thinkers react strongly to any earlier stages of thinking and societies.

The second tier perspectives go past the Post Modern pluralistic contexts that exist in different cultures. Second tier consciousness is fully aware of the interior stages of development. It steps back and sees the big picture and therefore appreciates the necessary role all the various memes play. This Second tier **thinking thinks** in terms of the entire spiral of development and existence and not in terms of any single level. According to the works of Graves, Beck and Cowan there are at least two major stages to this second-tier integral psychology model.

## **7. Integrative**

Integrative thinkers view life as a blend of natural hierarchies (holarchies), systems, and forms.

The highest priorities of this perspective are flexibility, spontaneity, and functionality. Pluralities and differences can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows. Individuals complement Post Modern egalitarian thinking with natural degrees of ranking and excellence. These people feel that knowledge and competency should be considered over power, status, or group sensitivity. They see the prevailing order in the world as the result of the existence of different levels of realities (memes). Individuals feel that good governance facilitates the emergence of people through the levels of increasing complexity (nested hierarchy). Experts say that members are approximately 1% of the population and 5% of the power.

## **8. Holistic**

Individuals at this stage see an integration of differences. There is a universal holistic system of holons/waves of energies into one conscious system. It is not based on external rules (order) or group bonds (post modern). A “grand unification of things” is possible or what Wilber names, “a theory of everything”. The height of this level of development can be considered the height of integral thinking. Integral consciousness is said to have emerged by the 1970s itself. This thinking uses the entire spiral of developments waves and stages. These people see multiple levels of interaction, detects harmonics, the mystical forces, and the pervasive flow-states that permeate any organization (Lewis, 2006). **Any numbers on this group?**

### **Application of the Integral Psychology Model into Psychotherapy**

This comprehensive “Integral Model” can assist the Integral-Existential therapist in assisting the client in defining meaning according to where their perspective exists. Some clients may be mainly focused in a particular general paradigm and their issue could be with not being

compatible with those who are primarily of another. There also could be situations where the client has moved into another stage or perspective but doesn't have the terminology to define it; is still trying to exist in a former stage but is having an existential crisis such as depression or anxiety because of an inner need to change their external surrounding (relationships, work, etc) to match their new more expanded worldview. There are many countless variations that this Integral framework can assist in the existential therapeutic process of helping the client establish meaning in their lives.

### **Integral Psychology: States of Consciousness**

Wilber suggests in *Integral Spirituality* that there are 5 major natural states of consciousness: waking, dreaming, deep sleep, witnessing, and non-dual. Each state can be directly experienced. Waking states are what we experience such as riding a bike, reading a book or doing some sort of body work. Dream states are vivid dream experiences while sleeping, vivid day dreams, visualization exercises or certain types of meditation. Deep sleep occurs in sleep states and formless meditation where the individual experiences vast openness or emptiness. Non-dual awareness is the ever present ground of all states and can be experienced as such by all individuals.

In addition to these natural or ordinary states of consciousness, there exists non-ordinary or altered states of consciousness. These include exogenous states (e.g., drug induced), and endogenous states which include trained states such as meditative states. **Heightened states such as ordinary or non-ordinary states are called peak experiences??** (Wilber, 2006). Peak states of consciousness can give one a temporary experience of higher stages of consciousness. This can provide the individual an experiential existential knowing of transcendent states of consciousness

which can help the individual more quickly progress through the various stages of consciousness.

## **Dreams**

In my Integral-Existential theoretical approach, dreams can be a very powerful and direct avenue to examining the unconscious forces that affect our lives. Healing images from dreams offer new insight, direction and generate a sense of being within ourselves.

During the therapy session dreams can be discussed without any formalized theory. Clients have their own unique relationship with their unconscious complete with their own set of meanings. The role of the therapist is to help the client uncover or define their own meanings of the dream content and apply them to the here and now.

## **Development of Maladaptive Behavior**

Existentialist therapists assert that we fail to live in a state of awareness of our being, even risking anxiety; we will inevitably collapse into maladaptive patterns or behavior. People do not want to face the nature of their predicament and then in turn attempt to manipulate others into their self-deception. When this situation occurs, maladaptive behavior occurs (Westman, 1992). Maladaptive people lack authenticity so they lack meaning and a sense of being in the world. The Existential Therapist considers **that** all psychological symptoms result at some level from decisions that compromise this authenticity.

For the existentialist, maladaptive behavior is fundamentally the result of meaninglessness, of an existential vacuum according to Frankyl (1967). Substance abuse, family and marital discord, depression and confusion can develop as a result of perceived meaninglessness (Lantz and Pegram, 1989). This maladaptive behavior also occurs by individuals not embracing freedom and

responsibility, disregarding our true self and forsaking our genuine nature and meaning in life.

### **Function of the Therapist**

In this theoretical approach, the function of the therapist is to use the Integral Psychology (Spiral Dynamics) development model to help the client recognize where they exist within the holistic scope of the memes or stages of consciousness. The therapist has the role of helping clients restore meaning in their lives.

Therapists who use an existential perspective in helping clients are distinguished by an intellectual flexibility that is not threatened by the ideas and beliefs of others and that does not adhere solely to any one intellectual system, theory, or ideology. They display a personality that expresses freedom and responsibility which can provide strength to a struggling client from an acknowledgement that beliefs cannot be proven right or wrong but are expressions of faith (Arbuckle, 1975).

The therapist expects the therapeutic responsibility to reside directly with the client. The client is not viewed as a person to be evaluated, assessed, reported about or programmed to change, or modified. Therapy is not imposed and the client largely determines when the therapy starts, the pace of each step of the therapy process, and ending therapy.

The existential therapist is grounded in the immediate subjective experience of encountering the client. The relationship is an encounter built on honesty in which therapists expose their true selves. There is an emphasis on a presence that puts personal needs aside and focuses exclusively on the client “one existence communicating with another”(May, Angel, & Ellenberger 1958). The therapist’s ability to be genuinely human enables clients to become aware

of similar qualities in themselves. “Encounter is always a potentially creative experience; it normally ensues in the expanding of consciousness, the enrichment of the self” (May, 1994).

### **Integral-Existential Process of Change**

The therapist can view the process of this change from six perspectives. These changes occur between a counselor and the client during a period of sessions which is determined by the client’s situation.

First, change occurs as a result **of** insight, understanding personal modes of existing along with developing a sense of choice, freedom and responsibility. This provides an opportunity for the client to discover their own potential and **exercising** a new way of being on the world.

The second perspective is that change occurs through a process of therapeutic encountering with a genuine meeting of persons, and open confrontation, a full being and presence with one another. There is a risk of an existential clash which can lead to growth and transformation.

Third, change can occur when clients bring forward their potential for existing. This is described as opening up, **of?** actualization, **of** being, existing and experiencing one’s own potential.

Fourth, change occurs by means of an internal process of therapeutic experiencing of the person and their own deeper potential for existing. The internal encounter may cause existential clashes and culminate in an integrative meeting, in a welcoming intimacy between clients and their inner potentials.

Fifth, change occurs when clients completely disengage from their own self, identity or personality structure to enter into a deeper mode or existence of being that leads to a deeper experiencing. In this existential death and rebirth the inner most core of the client undergoes radical

transformation into a new and authentic being.

Finally, change occurs when clients open up new perspectives and ways of being when they construct new and changing life situations. They risk the actual new ways of being in the worlds of their own construction (Parrott, 158).

## **Goals of Therapy**

The goals of this approach emerge from the therapeutic process itself. May states, “The aim of therapy is that the patient experiences his existence as real” (May, Angel & Ellenberger, 1958, P. 85). The Therapist’s goal is to stimulate the person’s willingness to work through the pain, to offer help without the risk of offering strength without dependence (Corlis and Rabe 1969, p. 13). Frey and Hesler explain that “existential counselors agree with the general goals of most other **approaches counseling and psychotherapy**, but seek to embellish these general goals with existential points of view” (1975, p.43) The overarching purpose is to help the client to be able to make decisions with responsibility and to find purpose and meaning in life.

## **Phases of Therapy with Methods and Techniques**

### **Initial stage**

In the Initial phase, the Integral-Existential therapist establishes an authentic relationship as a “fellow traveler” with the client. The first session can cause anxiety for the client because he or she may not know what to expect. The therapist explains **over** each stage of the process (Initial, Working and Final). During this initial stage the therapist explains that each person is unique with their own beliefs, meanings, thoughts, and perceptions, and first person subjective experience of the world.

A goal is for the therapist to help the client to uncover more of their true authentic self through a series of sessions. Once the client gets **in more in touch** with their true inner self, the client and therapist can have an honest dialogue on meaning and responsibility. The remaining stages will help uncover where the client authentically exists within the Integral framework. The therapist can finally help align the client inner self to better match their outer reality in more adaptive ways (relationships, career, cultural, social and religious life).

### **Working Stage**

The first phase of the working stage involves the therapist briefly focusing on the past to gain a brief narrative of the client's evolution of perspectives working to the present. The therapist will invite the client to tell their personal story and listen with empathy. The therapist is encouraged to interact authentically and ask questions or explore topics anytime through the story. The therapist will listen using the Integral Psychology (Spiral Dynamics) model to determine where the client resides on the spiral model. In some cases, the Therapist can be somewhat more directive to uncover this information.

Once the primary Integral perspective (Mythic-Religious, Scientific Rational, Post Modern, etc.) is established, it will then provide the therapist a baseline and information on what questions or topics to confront the client with during the continuing sessions. For example, the client may be a Post Modern thinker and is having difficulties at relationships or work. The issue may exist due to a difference in perspective in a romantic relationship (Fundamentalist Christian or Mythic-Religious), corporate culture (Scientific-Rational), or worldviews of boss (Power Gods-Individualistic), or neighbors (Power Gods or Magical-Animistic, such as ethnocentric gangs). The

interpersonal dynamic may be maladjusted because of this existential clashing of worldviews. This could in turn have an effect on the client's sense of meaning or lack of meaning and effect work performance or behavior.

The second phase of the working stage concerns exploring the client's worldview with a holistic approach. The Therapist uses the four quadrant model based on Wilber's theoretical framework to integrate the first person subjective reality with the four modern value spheres. The therapist can examine current meanings and definitions that surround the client's interior experience of the external world (family, friends, culture, society, religion) and level of responsibility.

### **Integral Psychology: The Four Quadrant Model**

Wilber observes that a fundamental distinguishing feature of our current modern period is the differentiation of the cultural value spheres: the realms of the individual ("I"), culture ("WE"), nature ("IT") and society ("THEY"). Another way of describing the model is the domains of psychology/art, religion/morality, natural science, and social science. Wilber represents these modern differentiations in terms of four quadrants in Figure 1 (Lewis, 2006).

	Interior	Exterior
Individual	<b>Interior/Individual</b> Upper Left (UL) Quadrant I Intentional - "I"	<b>Exterior/Individual</b> Upper Right (UR) Quadrant II Behavioral - "it"

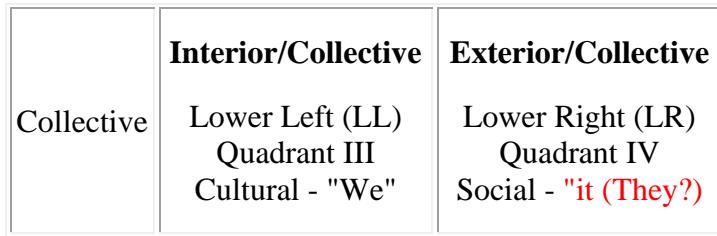


Figure 1: Integral Psychology: The Four Quadrant Model

Figure 1. The Four Quadrant Model. Reprinted from *Rational Spirituality*, by M.M. Lewis (2006), Retrieved from [http://rationalspirituality.com/articles/Ken\\_Wilber\\_4\\_Quadrants.htm](http://rationalspirituality.com/articles/Ken_Wilber_4_Quadrants.htm) (2006) by MM. Lewis. Reprinted with permission.

The interpersonal dynamic between the client and therapist can help further uncover the authentic relationship with the self and each of the four quadrants. The therapist may empathetically inquire and listen to the client to gain information regarding meaning, aloneness, responsibility, perspectives on death and other potential areas in each quadrant. The client and therapist may then progress to any of the other quadrants to acquire a more holistic picture. The client can be directed to upper left to right and explore the behavioral aspects and the physical expression (late to work, fought a friend, etc) and the lower left cultural experiences (what the culture is like at work) and lower right experience in social systems (organizational policies and procedures, family customs, systems, etc). The therapist helps the client explore and gain a more holistic and comprehensive perspective on their issues. The irrational beliefs and maladaptive behaviors are identified by the therapist and often made aware to the client by exploring each quadrant during the therapy session.

The third and final phase of the working stage **is emphasizes** the therapist confronting the client's life issues in three main polarities that are germane to the human condition (1) Dependence versus independence. (2) Rationality versus irrationality; and (3) freedom versus determinism.

Since there is a possibility of the client who avoids this issue to fall into an existential crisis (i.e. despair, anxiety, guilt, etc). The therapist approaches these philosophical alternatives head on. The solving of these dilemmas provides meaning and purpose in life. The most important attribute the therapist can bring to his or her clients is a “philosophy of life” (Bugental, 1965; Yalom, 1980).

Once the client becomes aware of the maladaptive thinking and behavioral patterns, the therapist assists the client in disengaging from their own identification with those beliefs, and definitions and/or meaning. The client can then enter into a deeper mode of existence of being that leads to a deeper experiencing, a changed perspective and meaning in life, increased responsibility, and experience an increase in adaptive behaviors.

### **Final Stage**

In the final stage of Integral-Existential-Therapy, the client has reached a point of experiencing more of their core authentic self. The therapist can observe this realization through the client being able to effectively verbally identify and explain in detail the maladaptive behaviors, irrational beliefs, and becoming more aware of how their worldview affects their experience. The client can also begin to describe their current state of more adaptive beingness in the here and now. The therapist can then help facilitate the client with their new found awareness in achieving the goal of creating meaning in their lives.

### **Conclusion**

Integral-Existential Therapy has grown from the synthesis of Integral Psychology and Existential therapy. The Integral Psychology work of Ken Wilber has been essential in shaping my unique therapeutic approach to psychotherapy. One of the main strengths of this therapy is that it

is the based on the most comprehensive and holistic and inclusive model of human consciousness to date.

As individuals the ability to make personal decisions is limited by our knowledge frame of reference, or perspective. Integral Psychology provides the extensive frame of reference for the therapist to refer to in the therapy session with a client. By using the Spiral Dynamics Integral Model, the therapist can more effectively identify where the client's authentic perspective exists and therefore help the client gain a self awareness that leads to positive transformation.

The therapists' use of the Wilber's four quadrant model provides a framework to explore a more holistic view of the client's situation. The Integral-Existential Therapist can assist the client in aligning their inner self to better match their outer reality in more adaptive ways to include interpersonal relationships, career, **cultural, and social**. The goal of finding meaning in one's life and living it in a healthy way can be achieved though Integral-Existential therapy.

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